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American School
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A TRACE OF EGYPT AT ELEUSIS

[PLATE VIII]

IN the National Museum at Athens there is one piece of sculpture, the ram's head from Eleusis,¹ that has not attracted the attention it deserves. Both on account of its intrinsic excellence, and on account of certain deductions which may be drawn from it, we are justified in discussing it at some length.

It was found in the excavations of 1883, in front of the middle of Philon's Porch, at a depth of 2.50 m.² It is clear from the description of the circumstances of its discovery, which emphasizes traces of fire and the pre-Phidian character of the fragments of sculpture here brought to light, that the excavators were in the "Perserschutt," though they had not yet learned to know it by that name. The "Persian fury" fell upon Eleusis as well as upon Athens, and figures like the Acropolis maidens were found in these excavations in the same battered condition as their more famous sisters.³

There is no difficulty in fixing the date of this ram's head within certain narrow limits. The head projects from a block which was the corner-piece⁴ of the cornice of a building. The block shows on its right side the beginning of the ascending

¹ Kabbadias, *Catalogue*, no. 58.

² Πρακτικά, 1883, pp. 60-63.

³ *E. g.*, Kabbadias, *Catalogue*, nos. 24-26, and Έφ. Αρχ. 1884, pl. viii.

⁴ Its position on the building is illustrated by restorations of the temple of Aegina: *Durm, Baukunst der Griechen*, 2^{te} Auflage, p. 155, fig. 119; and *Expédition Scientifique de Morée*, vol. III, pl. lvi; and of the temple of Bassae, *op. cit.* vol. II, pl. xxvi. Its dimensions are: length, 0.56 m. (at the top); depth, 0.52 m.; height, 0.32 m. The profile of the face extends along the whole right side.

line of the oblique cornice of the gable, with a very low pitch of about 1:5. What the building was is as good as certain. The block is of island marble, as are the roof tiles found in considerable quantity in and around the great temple, and it bears traces of fire. Island marble had its day in Attica in the time of Pisistratus. Tiles and cornice-block alike belong to the temple of Pisistratus, the columns of which have been discerned amid the ruins of the later temple.¹

The upper surface of the block is left rough, which does not imply that it was never put in place, for the face is not only carefully wrought, but painted. Perhaps it was never intended to put a corner *acroterion* upon it. A temple need not have such ornaments to pass as finished; and if it were desired at any time to add them, the smoothing-off could be done for the occasion. It is a curious feature of the block that the convex moulding, 0.10 m. broad, stops at the left of the head, 0.04 m. short of the edge. No certain pattern can be made out of the traces of paint, although something like a painted leaf is pretty certain, marked, not by remaining paint, but by different preservation of the surface of the marble. It is said by those who saw the block ten years ago at Eleusis that the paint was then quite conspicuous. The head is not a gargoyle, in the proper sense of the word, but a solid architectural ornament.² It has some clear testimony to give as to its own date. The band of hair around the forehead, extending downward in front of the horns, and the hair covering the throat are made up of just such locks as compose the hair of the Harmodius head in the group of Naples Tyrannicides and of the archaic Ludovisi head (Brunn-Bruckmann, no. 223); viz. flat, snail-shell ring-

¹ That there was any other temple of Demeter at Eleusis besides the great building generally known as the Telesterion or Initiation Hall is uncertain. Certainly the foundations on the hill above it, which Blavette, *B.C.H.* 1884, p. 262, took to be the ruins of a very old Demeter temple, belong to Roman times. Cf. Rubensohn, *Die Mysterienheiligthümer in Eleusis und Samothrake*, p. 112; Philios, *Eleusis, ses mystères, ses ruines, et son musée*, p. 65.

² Dimensions: length from the face of the block to the break at the tip of the nose, 0.40 m.; breadth at the junction with the block, 0.31 m.

lets, as we may call them, in distinction from the corkscrew curls of the so-called Antenor figure of the Acropolis and the male head in the British Museum, published in *B.C.H.* 1893, pls. xii and xiii. There are very marked tear-ducts, 0.03 m. long, extending downward in a curve from the inner corner of each eye, a feature paralleled in the archaic horse in front of the Acropolis Museum,¹ which Winter² makes contemporary with the Rampin head, and so with the bloom of the Chian period.³

The peculiarity of the hair, according to Graef,⁴ shows such an advance in style over the corkscrew curls as to point to a later date. This consideration would put our head rather late in the pre-Persian period, and of course in speaking of the Telesterion of Pisistratus one does not imply that it was completed before his death or before the fall of his sons, any more than one claims the same for the old Athene temple on the Acropolis.⁵

The peculiarity of the tear-duct, however, draws us backward in time, and it seems advisable to place the ram's head somewhere near the horse which has been fixed by Winter's careful study of the series of archaic horses from the Acropolis.

Besides the curls already described, the triangle at the top of the head between the horns is filled with round knobs which the sculptor did not elaborate into curls, perhaps because they could not be seen when the block was in position. Within the circle on the cheek formed by the horns the same knobs appear in the upper half, while the lower half, which could not be seen from below, was left rough.

The curls across the forehead and down the side of the head contain in their hollows much blue paint, which shows no sign of turning to green, as seems to have been the case with so much of the blue on the Acropolis sculpture. The locks under

¹ *Jahrbuch des deutschen Inst.* 1893, fig. 9, p. 139.

² *Ibid.* p. 148.

³ A stag recently found at Delphi shows a somewhat similar tear-duct.

⁴ *Ath. Mitth.* 1890, p. 2.

⁵ Cf. Schrader, *Ath. Mitth.* 1897, p. 112.

the neck are wrought as carefully as the others, but show no trace of paint. If it was ever applied, it may have been washed away by the block being turned upside down for a long time.

A ram with blue wool perhaps needed no apology to a generation which had always had the blue bulls of poros sculpture before its eyes. But if any one did call the sculptor to account, could he not say that he was representing the ram of Ulysses with his dark violet wool?¹

But lest any one should think that it is wasting words to discuss the style of a sheep's head, as if it were a human head, I may as well declare that this head seems to me to bear the palm in archaic animal sculpture, as the bronze ram in the museum at Palermo² bears the palm in animal sculpture in the times of fully developed art. Even the best of the Acropolis horses do not approach it in exquisite finish. Such terms as "fini de l'exécution," "délicatesse," "caressé," which Lechat³ is so fond of applying to his favorite Acropolis maiden, are not out of place here.

It is of course unfortunate for the total effect that the tip of the nose, like so many other noses of gods and men, is broken off. It is less damaging that the tips of the horns also, being most exposed, were broken off as a matter of course, perhaps in a fall from a high place. But after all not much is lost. A good part of the nostrils filled with red paint is still preserved, and from that point upward we have the face of a fine old bell-wether: first, a rising, swelling, expanding nose — a regular hillock of bone, emphasizing the essential difference between the head of the ram and that of the ewe. Then come the parts about the eyes worked with extreme care and showing delicate curvatures. The black paint of the eyeballs is well preserved. The horns form an unsurpassed piece of realism. All the striations, with their obliquities and curves, could not be more true in a petrified ram. It is just beyond the point where

¹ Hom. *Od.* ι 426, *λοδνεφὲς εἶπος*. Cf. δ 135.

² *Arch. Zeit.* 1871, pl. 25.

³ *B.C.H.* 1890, pp. 121-132.

the striations cease, and the plain tips begin, that the horns are broken off.

When one considers that this was only an architectural ornament in which we expect something merely schematic, *Dutzendarbeit*, and placed so high that none of this detail could be appreciated, we seem to see a waste of care. But this sculptor was evidently bent on finishing his work *ad unguem*, whether it was to receive the meed of admiration or not.

It is, however, not merely to praise the execution of the head that I here take the opportunity of publishing it, but to express surprise that no one has shouted out over it the word "Egyptian," as did Bérard over his seated figure found at the so-called temple of Demeter near Tegea.¹

More than half a century has elapsed since savants like Creuzer and Thiersch were willing to take Diodorus Siculus² at his word and consider Erectheus an Egyptian who became king of Attica and introduced the Eleusinian mysteries from Egypt. In that interval all that Herodotus says about the derivation of the Greek gods from Egypt, and in particular what he says about the worship of Demeter being introduced into Greece through Argos by the daughters of Danaus,³ has been thrown overboard. Otfried Müller came and with his keen logic cut away the curtain on which Herodotus and his lineal descendants had painted the beginnings of history, and men saw the past in clearer perspective. Then arose a science of Egyptology, and for the last twenty-five years one has hardly dared to pronounce the words Eleusis and Egypt together for fear of the Egyptologists. So, in 1895, when the Greek excavators at Eleusis found, in a grave containing vases of the very oldest class, some scarabs and a statuette of Isis, they said very little about it. Philios, in his Guide to Eleusis,⁴ even goes out of his way to declare that the resemblance in form of the Telesterion to the hypostyle halls of Egypt is no proof that the cult of Eleusinian Demeter had its origin in Egypt.

¹ *B.C.H.* 1890, p. 382.

² *Diod. Sic.* I, 29.

³ *Herod.* II, 171.

⁴ *Eleusis, ses mystères, ses ruines, et son musée*, p. 70.

But without exactly shouting the word "Egyptian" over this ram's head, we may boldly call attention to its claims as a token of Egyptian influence at Eleusis. In the first place it is significant that, whereas lions' heads are universally used in Greece as gargoyles and architectural ornaments,¹ we find here at Eleusis a ram's head in their place. It will be allowed without discussion that the ram holds a conspicuous place in Egypt. Witness the long rows of ram sphinxes at Luxor; the ram-headed gods Ammon, Ra, and Knumu;² and the rams' heads on the *bari* or sacred book of the dead.³

A corroboration of the correctness of our derivation of this ram's head from Egypt, and perhaps more than a corroboration, a proof even, to one who might regard the numerous appearances of the ram in Egypt as inadequate proof, is a vase of the *Sabouroff Collection* (pl. lxx) in the form of a ram's head, a product of Attic ceramic art. The *penchant* of vase-makers for copying noted pieces of sculpture is well known. If now a potter had wished to reproduce our ram's head, it is difficult to see how he could have done it more accurately. The ram's face on the vase has the same great bulge. The almost unique tear-duct is faithfully reproduced. On such a small scale one would hardly expect incised lines to convert the little knobs representing the locks around the forehead and cheeks into the snail-shell forms of the sculptured head.

The vase bears a tell-tale inscription, scratched upon it at a time not much after the making, which Furtwängler (*op. cit.*) puts as rather before than after the middle of the fifth century. The inscription runs 'Ελεφαντίδος εἰμι ἱερός. Elephantis is a variant for Elephantine, and as there is no such divinity known as Elephantis, it appears that the Attic potter, or the dedicator, if he was a different person, took the name of the place for that of a divinity. Since Knumu, the ram-headed god, was

¹ Durm, *Baukunst der Griechen*, 2^{te} Auflage, p. 137, speaks even of the lions' heads in architecture as derived from Egypt.

² Maspero, *Histoire Ancienne*, p. 239 (Relief at Elephantine).

³ Perrot et Chipiez, *Histoire de l'Art dans l'Antiquité*, I, pl. ii (Walls at Karnak), and fig. 209, p. 359 (at Elephantine).

the great divinity at Elephantine,¹ we may understand the inscription as spoken by the ram-headed vase itself as a figure at Argos might say, *τὰς Ἡρας εἰμὶ ἰαρός*. The vase is attached to Egypt by its inscription, and by its form to Eleusis, and thus it links the two together.

The vase must have been made at least twenty years, and probably more than fifty years, after the head. If the Telesterion of Pisistratus was destroyed by the Persians, the head would in all probability have been under ground nearly twenty years before the vase was made. In that case we should have to suppose some common link now lost. Two rams' heads appear on a marble cornice-block in the second Acropolis museum, belonging to the old Athene temple. One is certainly a gargoyle. Both are broken off so close to the block that one might think them replicas of the head in question. But Theodor Wiegand, who is making a study of the ancient temples on the Acropolis, tells me that still in his judgment they are somewhat more archaic.

It is, however, at least possible that the head was above ground long enough to serve as a model for the potter. The Persians burned the Telesterion of Pisistratus;² but there is no reason to suppose that they tore it down any more than they did the old temple of Athene on the Acropolis. The destruction is, indeed, likely to have been less thorough at Eleusis than at Athens, which was the especial object of Persian vengeance. When the so-called Cimonian Telesterion was built the old one, of course, had to be removed. But "Cimonian" is only a convenient term to designate what came between Pisistratus and Pericles. A provisional restoration, not more difficult,

¹ At a time when Greeks were familiar enough with Lower Egypt, the knowledge of Elephantine, on the remotest bounds of the land, would probably come to an Athenian potter, if it came at all, in about the form in which adventurers like those who cut their names at Abu Symbel, a century and a half before, were likely to bring it. It is surprising to find so early a vase of an animal form which subsequently became so popular in *rhyta*. It is also difficult to find an occasion for a dedicatory offering like this in Greece.

² Herod. IX, 65.

perhaps, than that which must have followed upon the ravages of Cleomenes, may have served for the home of the mysteries for twenty years, before the rebuilding energy spread from Athens to Eleusis; and this would bring the temple down to about the time of the vase.

This head, then, is our earliest monumental evidence of Egyptian influence upon Greece, and it brings Egypt and Eleusis together in a very different way from that proposed by Diodorus and Creuzer; but in a way which gives substantially what they claimed, putting it, however, at a different time, and taking account of the perspective established by sober, historical research. Instead of the bald, dead equation, Demeter = Isis, we have proof of a stream of influence which, beginning as far back as Psammetichus, flowed into Greece from the older civilization. In one respect, at least, it seems to have been a life-giving stream, and not like the corrupting current which flowed from the Orontes into the Tiber. That this influence was felt, especially at Eleusis, cannot be doubted when we see it in operation, as it is described by Wilamowitz (*Homerische Untersuchungen*, p. 208). He claims that the element which gave the worship of Demeter at Eleusis its importance — the doctrine of personal immortality that had brooded over Egypt for ages — was not known at Eleusis, even in the time of the composition of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter.¹ But shortly afterwards it was welcomed by thousands, and among them the best men of Greece. When Cicero praised the mysteries, partly, perhaps, because he wished to be in line with the Greek writers, they had become largely an empty form or a superstition. But to Pindar they were a sacrament. Wilamowitz does not ascribe the new revelation to Egypt. But if, at the very time when Egypt is seen drawing near to Greece, the doctrine of individual

¹ This, of course, implies the rejection of the passage 474–483, which, indeed, has been rejected by critics, on the ground that it is clearly an ending which breaks the force of the ending that follows immediately afterwards. Baumeister (*Hymni Homerici*, p. 280) boldly puts the whole hymn in the age of Pisistratus, when the doctrine of immortality is, of course, fitting.

immortality appears as a living force, why not recognize the source?

We have learned in the last two decades a good deal about the age of Pisistratus and about the enlightened tyrant himself, living in an atmosphere of art, poetry, and religion. We seem to know him almost as well as we know Pericles. We may proceed to conjectures about him, and suppose that he who did so much for Athena and Dionysus is likely to have borne Demeter also in mind. One may take liberties with a writer like Apollodorus, and we may amend his statement (III, 14, 7), that in the reign of Pandion, Demeter and Dionysus came to Attica, and say that in the deepest and truest sense Demeter and Dionysus came to Attica in the reign of Pisistratus. While it would be rash to suppose that the man who cared so much for Homeric poetry as well as contemporary poetry must needs have been "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," there is yet no man better qualified than he to have given that transformation to the worship of Demeter which made it the great ethical force in the ancient world.

Of course, in spite of the fact that Homer hardly seems to know of Demeter, her worship does extend back into the remote past of Greece, and there was that in it which made it easy to graft upon it the high ethics and the discipline of sorrow which is incorporated in the face of the Demeter of Cnidus. The goddess of agriculture,

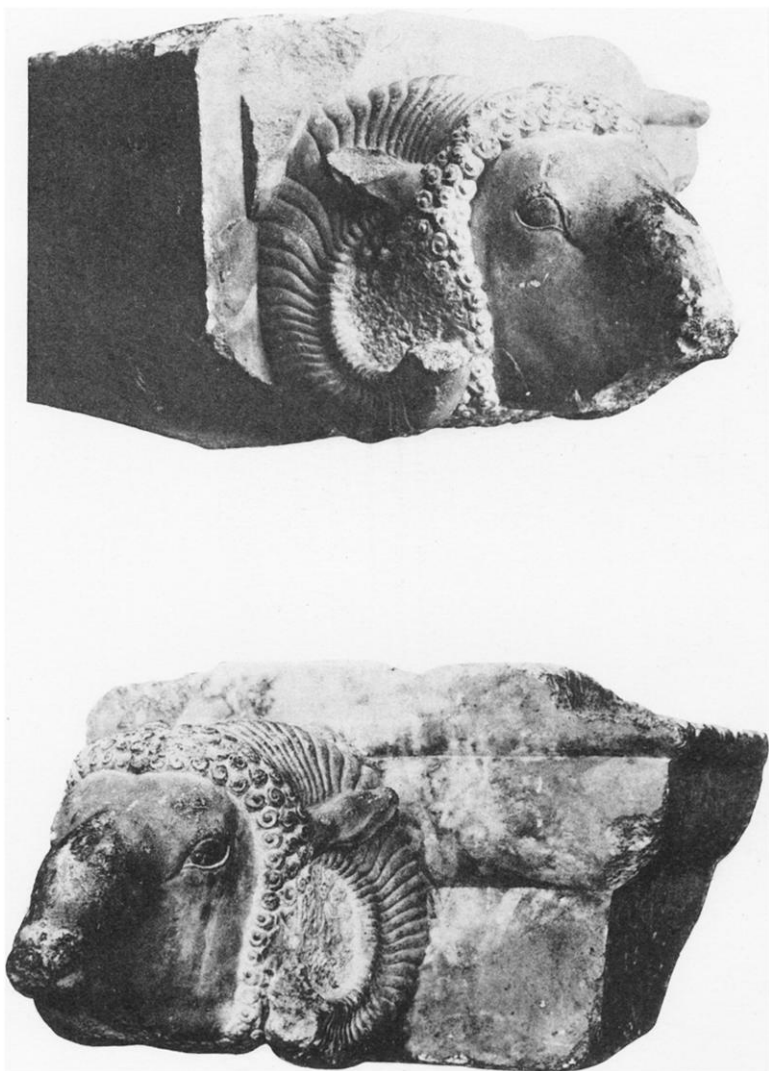
"Die herein von den Gefilden
Zog den ungesell'gen Wilden "

and accustomed him to law and order, might be better fitted to act as the keeper of the keys which opened the door unto eternal life than great Zeus himself. The seed which seemed to die, but which sprung up in abounding life, suggested that there might be another chance for the man who goes down into the earth.

What further discoveries at Eleusis may reveal we cannot predict. But it is satisfactory to trace that touch of Egypt

which has been so often suspected and asserted, neither in the mythological past, of which we have no certain knowledge, nor in the period commencing with the Ptolemies, when Egypt poured herself upon Greece, and Greece in return poured herself upon Egypt, but in the times when the Hellenic peoples, conscious of their power, were girding themselves for the race. Then it was that Egypt passed along her torch, the best thing she had to give, to a swifter runner in the world's great *Lampadephoria*.

RUFUS B. RICHARDSON.



RAM'S HEAD FROM ELEUSIS